

Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 294501

NODIS
FOR SCRANTON ONLY

FOLLOWING REPEAT GENEVA 9553 SENT ACTION SECSTATE 30 NOV 76

QUOTE S E C R E T GENEVA 9553

NODIS
FOR AF-EDMONDSON FROM WISNER

DEPT PASS LONDON FOR SEITZ AND MASERU FOR AMB SCHAUFELE

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, RH, UK
SUBJECT: RHODESIA CONFERENCE: INTERIM GOVERNMENT DISCUSSIONS

1. BRITISH HELD MEETINGS WITH THE SITHOLE, MUZOREWA
AND PATRIOTIC FRONT DELEGATIONS ON THE QUESTION OF THE
INTERIM GOVERNMENT. THE MEETINGS WITH SITHOLE'S REPRESENTATIVES
AND MUZOREWA WENT EXTREMELY WELL. THE PATRIOTIC FRONT
PUT UP A STUBBORN AND DISAPPOINTING PERFORMANCE.

2. THE BRITISH OPENED THE MEETING WITH SITHOLE'S
REPRESENTATIVE, MALINDI, BY REFINING IN GREATER
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DETAIL THEIR CONCEPT OF AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT. HENRY
STEEL TOOK THE FLOOR AND SAID THAT THE BRITISH HAD
IN MIND A TWO TIER GOVERNMENT. THE UPPER TIER - FOR
WANT OF A BETTER TERM, THE PRIVY COUNCIL - COULD CONCEIVABLY

BE ORGANIZED WITH 5, 6 OR 8 MEMBERS AND WOULD INCLUDE RHODESIA'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP. THE SECOND TIER WOULD BE A LARGER COUNCIL OF MINISTERS WHICH WOULD BE LESS POLITICAL IN NATURE AND WOULD CONCEIVABLY INCLUDE NONE OF THE PRESENT POLITICAL LEADERSHIP. THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DAY-TO-DAY ADMINISTRATION. THE PRIVY COUNCIL WOULD TAKE CHARGE OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT, PREPARATION OF THE CONSTITUTION, AND BASIC LEGISLATION.

3. THE BRITISH ALSO SAID THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO CONSIDER ORGANIZING A NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL TOGETHER WITH THE MINISTERS OF DEFENSE AND LAW AND ORDER, IF THEY EXIST, AND CHIEFS OF STAFFS OF THE ARMED FORCES, ALTHOUGH THE LATTER WOULD NOT HAVE VOTING POWER. IN SHORT, THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WOULD ACT LIKE A MULTI-HEADED MINISTER OF DEFENSE.

4. WITH RESPECT TO LEGISLATION DURING TRANSITION, THE BRITISH SUGGESTED THAT THE PRESENT BODY OF RHODESIAN LAW WOULD HAVE TO BE TAKEN OVER AND VALIDATED BY BRITISH ORDERS AND COUNCIL. THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT, THE BRITISH ARGUED, WOULD NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT TIME TO REPLACE RHODESIA'S BODY OF LAW.

5. MALINDI OPENED WITH A THINLY VEILED ATTACK AGAINST NKOMO. HE REVIEWED EVENTS ON RHODESIA SINCE 1974 AND SAID THAT A CERTAIN MAJOR FIGURE HAD ENJOYED A PRIVILEGED POSITION WITHIN RHODESIA AND WITH THE WESTERN POWERS. IF THIS FIGURE EMERGED AS THE PRIME MINISTER. HE WOULD BE OPPOSED BY TRUE FREEDOM FIGHTERS.

6. HAVING DELIVERED HIS POLITICAL POETRY, MALINDI SAID THAT THE SITHOLE DELEGATION PREFERRED THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT INCLUDE NON OF THE NATION'S KEY POLITICAL LEADERS AND THAT THE QUESTION OF WHO SHOULD
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BE PRIME MINISTER OUGHT TO BE AVOIDED DURING THE CONFERENCE IN GENEVA. THE DELEGATION DID NOT LIKE THE IDEA OF A PRIVY COUNCIL WHICH INCLUDED POLITICAL LEADERSHIP.

7. THE BRITISH SUGGESTED THAT MALINDI CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL BEING ORGANIZED ALONG THE LINES OF THE BRITISH WAR CABINET UNDER CHURCHILL. IT SHOULD BE AN ELITE GROUP OF KEY MINISTERS. THIS ARGUMENT APPEALED TO MALINDI WHO, WHILE NOT ACCEPTING IT ENTIRELY, SEEMED READY TO PUT HIS DELEGATION'S OBJECTION ASIDE.

8. WITH RESPECT TO RHODESIAN LEGISLATION, MALINDI AGREED THAT THE GREAT MAJORITY OF LEGISLATION WOULD HAVE TO BE MAINTAINED. THERE WERE TWO LAWS WHICH ARE OBJECTIONABLE - THE LAND APPORTIONMENT ACT AND THE LAW AND ORDER MAINTENANCE ACT. THE BRITISH SAID THEY UNDERSTOOD MALINDI'S OBJECTION TO THIS LEGISLATION BUT SAID MANY FEATURES OF THESE LAWS WERE "BREAD AND BUTTER ISSUES." THEY COULD NOT ABOLISHED WITHOUT SUBSTITUTE LEGISLATION BEING DEVELOPED. MALINDI TOOK THE POINT.

9. HE THEN ASKED IF THEY BRITISH WERE PREPARED TO SEND A GOVERNOR GENERAL. RICHARD REPLIED THAT THERE WERE "GOVERNOR GENERALS AND GOVERNOR GENERALS." SOME EXERCISE LITTLE MORE THAN CEREMONIAL POWERS; OTHERS EXERCISE FULL EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT CONSIDER EXECUTIVE OR ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY NOR WOULD IT CONSIDER SENDING BRITISH TROOPS TO RHODESIA. IF THE NATIONALISTS WERE PREPARED TO SPELL OUT THEIR CONCEPTION OF WHAT A GOVERNOR GENERAL SHOULD DO, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WOULD CONSIDER THE MATTER.

10. THE MEETING WITH THE SITHOLE DELEGATION CLOSED WITH A BRIEF DISCUSSION OF THE ROLE BRITAIN COULD PLAY AS CHAIRMAN OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL. MALINDI AND HIS COLLEAGUES SEEMED TO BE ATTRACTED TO THE IDEA OF A BRITISH PRESENCE IN BOTH BODIES.

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11. THE BRITISH ASKED MALINDI WHEN SITHOLE PLANNED TO RETURN TO GENEVA. MALINDI SAID THAT HE DID NOT KNOW FOR SURE BUT SAID THAT SITHOLE WOULD COME BACK AS SOON AS HIS PRESENCE WAS REQUIRED. HE IS PRESENTLY ON HIS WAY TO LUANDA.

12. IN THEIR MEETING WITH MUZOREWA'S DELEGATION, THE BRITISH OPENED WITH A PRESENTATION SIMILAR TO THAT GIVEN TO THE SITHOLE GROUP. THE BISHOP SAID THAT HE CONTINUED TO INSIST ON ELECTIONS FOR THE POST OF PRIME MINISTER BUT WAS WILLING TO LEAVE THAT ISSUE TO ONE SIDE FOR THE MOMENT. HE SAID THAT WHILE HE PREFERRED A ONE TIER GOVERNMENT, HE COULD SEE ADVANTAGES IN THE BRITISH PROPOSAL THAT THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS NOT BE BOGGED DOWN IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION AND LEGISLATION.

13. LIKE MALINDI, MUZOREWA PRESSED THE BRITISH FOR A COMMITMENT TO THE ASSIGNMENT OF A GOVERNOR GENERAL. RICHARD HANDLED THE BISHOP AS HE HAD MALINDI AND THE BRITISH CONCLUDED FROM THE MEETING THAT WHILE MUZOREWA HAD NO FIXED IDEAS ON WHAT A GOVERNOR

GENERAL SHOULD DO, THEY HAD SET THE STAGE FOR "CLEARER THINKING."

14. THE AFTERNOON MEETING WITH THE PATRIOTIC FRONT PROVED MUCH LESS FRUITFUL. NKOMO AND MUGABE HANDED RICHARD TWO PAPERS. THE FIRST SPELLED OUT THE STRUCTURE OF A TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT AND THE SECOND A TIMETABLE FOR THE CONFERENCE (GENEVA 9551). THE BRITISH ASKED FOR A 10 MINUTE RECESS TO READ THE PATRIOTIC FRONT'S DOCUMENTS AND ONCE THE MEETING RECONVENED, BEGAN TO ASK NKOMO AND MUGABE FOR A MORE PRECISE DESCRIPTION OF WHAT THEY HAD IN MIND FOR THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT. THE PATRIOTIC FRONT ANSWERED THAT WHILE THEY KNEW THE ANSWERS TO THE BRITISH QUESTIONS THEY WERE NOT PREPARED TO DISCUSS THEM WITH THE BRITISH ALONE; RATHER THEY WOULD RESERVE THEIR ANSWERS UNTIL THE BRITISH BROUGHT TOGETHER ALL THE DELEGATIONS, INCLUDING THE RHODESIANS.

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15. RICHARD REPLIED THAT IT WAS NECESSARY FOR HIM TO GET SOME SENSE OF WHAT EACH DELEGATION HAD IN MIND IN ORDER THAT HE COULD ORGANIZE DISCUSSIONS. HE HAD CONDUCTED USEFUL DISCUSSIONS WITH MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE AND HAD TO DO THE SAME WITH NKOMO AND MUGABE.

16. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OUTLINED SO THINLY IN THE PATRIOTIC FRONT'S PAPER, COULD NOT GIVE HIM A SENSE OF WHAT THEY HAD IN MIND. IT WAS UNREALISTIC, FOR EXAMPLE, TO DIVIDE THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT DISCUSSIONS INTO WATER-TIGHT COMPARTMENTS WITHOUT THE POWERS OF THE GOVERNMENT BEING DEFINED.

17. THE FRONT ANSWERED THAT IF THE BRITISH WOULD ACCEPT THE BASIC STRUCTURE THEY WERE PROPOSING, THEY WOULD AGREE TO DISCUSS DETAILS. THE ENSUING EXCHANGE GOT NEITHER SIDE ANYWHERE AND FINALLY THE BRITISH AND THE FRONT AGREED TO ADJOURN AND RESUME DISCUSSIONS ON DECEMBER 1 AT 2:30.

18. THE BRITISH DO NOT KNOW WHY KNOMO AND MUGABE HAVE DECIDED TO OBSTRUCT DISCUSSIONS AT THIS EARLY STAGE. THEY SPECULATE THAT NKOMO IS SINCERELY WORRIED ABOUT WHAT THE BRITISH HAVE DEVELOPED WITH MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE AND WANTS TO BE SURE THAT NOTHING IS BEING WORKED OUT BEHIND HIS BACK. FOR THIS REASON, HE COULD BE INSISTING ON THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL DELEGATIONS. MUGABE'S DELEGATION, ON THE OTHER HAND, MAY BE LESS CLEAR ABOUT WHAT THEY WANT THAN NKOMO;

SOME OF MUGABE'S DELEGATION MAY BE DEPLOYING
WELL-TRIED WRECKING TACTICS.

19. THE BRITISH SHOWED ME A WIRE SERVICE REPORT
FROM MAPUTO WHICH SAID THAT THE VOICE OF ZIMBABWE
HAD ANNOUNCED ZIPA WOULD BE SENDING AN INDEPENDENT
DELEGATION TO GENEVA WHICH WOULD NOT BE A PART OF
ANY EXISTING DELEGATION, RATHER IT WOULD WORK TO
"SAFEGUARD THE INTERESTS" OF THE ZIMBABWEAN PEOPLE.

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THE BRITISH HAVE NO OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION OF THIS
REPORT.

20. THEY WERE UNHAPPY WITH NKOMO'S AND MUGABE'S
PERFORMANCE. IF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT STICKS TO ITS
DEMAND THAT ALL FIVE DELEGATIONS BE INCLUDED IN
DISCUSSIONS OF THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT, THE BRITISH
WILL BE FACED WITH A DIFFICULT DECISION. THEY ARE
AWARE THAT DISCUSSIONS COULD GET OUT OF CONTROL BUT WILL TAKE
NO DECISION ON WHAT TO DO UNTIL THEY HAVE MET WITH
THE FRONT ON DECEMBER 1.

21. COMMENT: THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE PERFORMANCE OF
SITHOLE'S AND MUZOREWA'S DELEGATIONS AND THE PATRIOTIC
FRONT IS STRIKING. IF THE BRITISH ONLY HAD TO DEAL
WITH THE FIRST TWO, THEY COULD MAKE RAPID
PROGRESS TOWARDS A SETTLEMENT WHICH WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE
TO THE RHODESIANS. EVEN NKOMO, IF ISOLATED FROM
MUGABE, MIGHT GO ALONG. THE PROBLEM AS CHONA
REMINDS US (GENEVA 9552) MAY LIE MORE WITH THE FRONT
LINE PRESIDENTS THAN WITH THE NATIONALISTS. THE
PRESIDENTS HAVE A GREATER INTEREST IN PRESERVING
THE PATRIOTIC FRONT AND MAINTAINING THEIR OWN UNITY,
THAN THEY MAY HAVE IN REACHING A REASONABLE SETTLEMENT
OF THE RHODESIAN QUESTION. CATTO

UNQUOTE ROBINSON

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